

HUMAN EVENTS
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Washington 'Post' Motto: Scoops Before Security

When will the responsible people in this country rise up *en masse* to stop the Washington *Post* from repeatedly undermining America's national security? The *Post*, for our out-of-town readers, is the powerful morning newspaper in the Nation's Capital that is ruled by Publisher Katherine Graham, who revealed her clout again last week by getting First Lady Nancy to visit her for several days at her home on Martha's Vineyard.

Week-in, week-out, Graham's newspaper vivisections the President personally, and eagerly seeks out ways to destroy both his foreign and domestic policies. Last week was no exception, with Graham's publication deciding to place in personal danger one of the key men on the President's National Security Council dealing with Latin America.

The *Post*'s conduct was outrageous. On Thursday, August 8, the New York *Times* ran an article disclosing that the anti-Communist insurgents in Nicaragua have been receiving direct military advice from a Marine officer who is a member of the White House's National Security Council. It quoted a senior Administration official as saying this officer had also helped the rebels raise money from private sources.

The story went on to say that the individual, who has extensive experience in intelligence work, meets frequently with rebel leaders in Washington, is in frequent contact with the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Department, and briefs the President. The Nicaraguan democratic resistance, an Administration official acknowledges, is "his account."

There was one thing lacking in the story, however. The man's name. It

was originally in the article, but the *Times*' Washington Bureau chief, Bill Kovach, told us the name was removed at the request of National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane. While abroad, McFarlane relayed his concern through his deputies that the printing of the man's name could expose him to considerable danger.

As Kovach told us, the name was excised "because they [NSC officials] were concerned that by focusing on him as an individual, we would hold him up to some danger. I discussed it with Abe Rosenthal, the executive editor, and it was a fairly easy decision for us because our feeling was that the important story was that the Contras' activity had moved into the National Security Council, and the individual was not that important so far as our readers were concerned.

"It's our basic policy not knowingly to put anybody's life in jeopardy."

But that decent standard apparently doesn't cut much ice with the editors of the *Post*. So on August 11, the *Post* ran a front-page story that identified the officer involved, detailed his supposed activities and generally portrayed him as a powerful and mysterious figure, pivotal to our anti-Communist policy in Latin America.

The fear expressed by McFarlane—that exposure of his name might cause him trouble—was quickly borne out by events. Almost as soon as the story appeared, remarked Johnathan Miller, the State Department's deputy coordinator of public diplomacy for Latin America and the Caribbean, the NSC official and his family began getting hate-filled phone calls and had to move out of town.

"I saw him on Monday [August 12]," Miller told us, "and he was ready to get his family out of Washington. They were getting harassed so much and getting threatening and obscene calls. He said he could take the heat, but he has four small children, and felt he had to get away. How long he's going to be gone is beyond me, but he's doing a number of things, including changing his phone to an unlisted number." Miller said he was personally out-

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raged by the "cavalier attitude" of the *Post* toward this man's safety.

Even after the threats had materialized, the *Post* displayed no contrition. To the contrary. On Wednesday, August 14, the *Post* ran another front-page story about the NSC official, but this time ran his picture as well, thus making it far easier, say intelligence experts, for a potential terrorist to maim or murder him. To some within the Administration, the *Post's* disregard for this official's physical and mental well-being was reminiscent of CounterSpy's treatment of Richard Welch in 1975 when Welch was the CIA station chief in Athens. Soon after CounterSpy published Welch's CIA connections, he was gunned down by terrorists.

The *Post* argued that it used the official's name in its Sunday story because he was a "public official" and that his name had already appeared in two AP stories, although the AP items had little impact and were not considered nearly as provocative or detailed.

But why, after he was harassed and threatened because of the first *Post* story — precisely the scenario McFarlane had feared — did the *Post* do another story on him three days later and print his picture as well? To make him an inviting target for those opposed to U.S. policy in Central America?

The *Post's* assistant managing editor, Jim Hoagland, was willing to tell us just a little about the photograph, but his remarks were hardly expansive. He talked to us a bit at the beginning, calling attention to the fact that the picture was a White House photo, thus leaving the impression that the White House hadn't minded the picture's release. But when asked if the photo had been officially released to the press, he paused for a long moment, then told us to "ask the White House." When we said the White House had told us no, he shifted gears, saying: "I urge you to take the White House at its word, sir."

He was even less responsive to the second question. Why, we asked, since the NSC official had been harassed after the first *Post* story had named him, did you feel impelled to run his photo just three days later? Hoagland's reply: "I don't have anything to say to you, sir."

Hoagland, in short, refused to say why the *Post* engaged in its wildly irresponsible deed, jeopardizing the life of a loyal U.S. military official implementing American policy.

That's par for the course when it comes to the *Post*, however. The *Post* is constantly being accused of damaging our national security. Late last year, the *Post* reported military aspects of a forthcoming space shuttle flight, which prompted Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger to accuse the *Post* of the "height of journalistic irresponsibility," insisting the newspaper may have given "aid and comfort to the enemy."

Earlier this year, the *Post* detailed potential American support for the Afghan freedom fighters in such a way that many felt the story actually jeopardized that assistance. Compromising conversations among allies were revealed, and President Zia of Pakistan was embarrassed.

In May, the intelligence community was sharply critical of the *Post* for a front-page story that left a totally false impression that the CIA was somehow connected with the March 8 car bombing in a Beirut suburb that killed more than 80 Shiite Moslems. Even the Democratic-dominated House Select Committee on Intelligence dismissed the implications of the *Post* story, while an Administration official contended that the *Post's* actions "put the lives of every American in Lebanon in jeopardy. . . . I find it utterly contemptible. It invites retaliation against every American in Beirut, including women and children." Indeed, one of the hijackers of TWA flight 847 used the news story to justify the murder of Robert Stethem, the Navy diver brutally murdered by his captors.

And this only scratches the surface. Last year the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, for instance, released a report that singled out Walter Pincus' lurid Washington Post pieces on the neutron weapon as having led to its demise.

The neutron weapon, in fact, is a low-yield atomic device that would have been particularly effective in stopping Soviet tanks if the Kremlin decided to invade Europe. As the report said, the "sensational and eerie impression" of the neutron bomb, that it killed people but left buildings intact (precisely what bullets do), "essentially was fostered by a series of articles written by Walter Pincus during the summer of 1977.

"Several members of Congress and most quarters of the journalism world hailed Pincus' stories as outstanding examples of investigative reporting. . . . His critics, on the other hand. . . lamented the stories as errant sensationalism. . . leading to a weakening of the U.S. nuclear deterrent. But both his supporters and critics within the federal bureaucracy did appear to agree on one thing: Without the appearance of the Pincus stories, the neutron bomb would probably have been routinely deployed in Western Europe."

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The Washington *Post* carries many shades of public opinion, but the paper as a whole frequently resembles an ideological battering ram of the McGovernite faction of the Democratic party. Largely through its front page, the *Post* crusades against all forms of Reaganism, and relishes firing lethal shots at his foreign and defense policies, no matter whom it hurts.

As Wesley Pruden of the Washington *Times* put it, "[I]f an American military officer, going about his lawful duties as assigned by the President under the laws of the United States gets bumped off by a terrorist, or his wife is hurt or his child is maimed, well, that's just a risk the stout fellows at the *Post* will have to take."

Isn't it about time that responsible people combine to wage a concerted campaign against the *Post's* highly unpatriotic acts?
